

REMARKS

Claims 2 – 20 and 23 - 32 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 21 and 22 are canceled by the present amendment.

Applicants note with appreciation that the Examiner indicated that claims 2 – 6, 8 – 10, 12 and 13 are allowed, and that claims 18 – 20, 22, 25, 26, 28 and 29 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In section 3 of the Office Action, claims 1, 7, 11, 17, 21, 23, 24 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5, 755,582 to Charlton (hereinafter “the Charlton patent”).

Claim 1 is canceled. As such, the rejection of claim 1 is rendered moot. Applicants are reserving the right to prosecute claim 1 by way of a continuation application.

Claim 7 is amended to depend from an allowed claim, namely claim 5. Thus, claim 7 is now in condition for allowance.

Claim 11 is amended to depend from an allowed claim, namely claim 10. Thus, claim 11 is now in condition for allowance.

Claim 17 is amended to include recitals from claim 21 and allowable claim 22. Thus, claim 17 is now in condition for allowance.

Claim 21 is canceled.

Claim 23, 24 and 27 depend from claim 17. By virtue of the allowability of claim 17, claims 23, 24 and 27 are also allowable.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the section 102(b) rejection of claims 1, 7, 11, 17, 21, 23, 24 and 27.

In section 5 of the Office Action, claims 14 – 16 and 30 – 32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,801,953 to Thoma et al. (hereinafter “the Thoma et al. patent”) in view of the Charlton patent.

Claims 14 – 16 are amended to depend from an allowed claim, namely claim 12. Thus, claims 14 – 16 are now in condition for allowance.

Claims 30 – 32 depend from claim 17. By virtue of the allowability of claim 17, claims 30 - 32 are also allowable.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the section 103(a) rejection of claims 14 – 16 and 30 – 32.

Claim 17 is amended to incorporate subject matter from other claims, and claims 7, 11, and 14 – 16 are amended to revise their dependencies. None of the amendments is intended to narrow the scope of any term of the claims, and as such, Applicants submit that the Doctrine of Equivalents should be available for all of the terms of all of the claims.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims presented in this application patentably distinguish over the prior art. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and that this application be passed to allowance.

Since this amendment neither raises new issues nor requires further consideration, entry is respectfully solicited. If the Examiner deems that the present amendment does not place the application in condition for allowance, Applicants respectfully request that it be entered for the purpose of appeal.

Respectfully submitted,



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